



Illinois Traffic Safety Leaders

SAFETY LEADS

a publication for safety leaders

“Since 1967 - Over 30 Years of Service”

FEBRUARY 1999

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Carol Meyer,
President
Illinois Traffic Safety Leaders



Here we are, one year away from the millennium and there are still people dying on our highways for the simple reason of not using part of the equipment in the vehicle - the safety belt. A very simple procedure taking only a few seconds.

It is time for action on a standard safety belt law!

Love and respect for others should be reason enough to buckle up. What a simple way to protect our precious children. In the event of a crash, their small fragile bodies become missiles being hurtled about or out of the vehicle. After the crash, there is so much sadness and suffering because of the loss of those young children which could (and should) have been prevented or lessened with the use of a safety belt or federally approved restraint system. Three out of five unbuckled motorists would have survived for mom and dads, family and friends, if they had been properly buckled up.

Yes, there is a safety belt law, but it is only a secondary law. This means a law enforcement officer must have another reason to stop the motorist. This just isn't good enough!

The time is now to move forward with dedication and commitment to pass a standard safety belt law.

Carol A. Meyer
President
Illinois Traffic Safety Leaders

Every hour someone dies in America simply because they didn't buckle up.



**STANDARD ENFORCEMENT OF
THE SAFETY BELT LAW IN LINCOLNSHIRE
RESULTS IN INCREASED USAGE AND DECREASED INJURIES**

In 1985, Illinois passed an occupant restraint law to reduce the number of deaths and injuries that were occurring on our roadways each year. The new law required the front seat driver and passengers to be secured in a properly adjusted safety belt. Enforcement was to be secondary, requiring law enforcement officers to observe another transgression of the Illinois Vehicle code before addressing the safety belt violation. This restriction was not applied to observed violations of the Child Restraint Act which was passed in 1983. In 1998, the Graduated Licensing Law strengthened the safety belt law by requiring all passengers under the age of 18 to be properly secured in a safety belt.

Unfortunately, the usage rate in Illinois has leveled out to approximately 64% and the proportion of motorists that are being injured and killed is still too high. Meager enforcement efforts and deficient adjudication of safety belt violations in some jurisdictions motivated local municipalities to amend their local ordinances to improve the safety of motorists traveling within their communities.

These amended ordinances have permitted local law enforcement officers to address safety belt violations like any other easily observed violations and take the appropriate "standard enforcement" action. Illinois courts have long recognized the authority of home rule laws and safety belt citations brought before local judges can now be ruled upon like most other traffic citations - on the merits of the case.

On April 4, 1998, during the start of the morning rush hour, two unsecured passengers were ejected from the rear doors of a van after another vehicle struck it broadside at the intersection of Rt. 22 (Half Day Road) and Barclay Boulevard in Lincolnshire. Both passengers were severely injured and one of them died later that evening.

On April, 13, 1998, the Lincolnshire Village Board unanimously voted to amend the safety belt ordinance to cover all occupants within the vehicle and permit standard enforcement of the law.

On April 18, 1998, at 10:15 p.m., a Jeep Cherokee left the roadway on Route 22 west of Riverwoods Road, drove into the drainage ditch and went airborne striking a tree. The driver, who was having a diabetic emergency, received relatively minor injuries as he was wearing his safety belt at the time of the crash.

Prior to the amendment of the aforementioned ordinance, safety belt usage rates were recorded at 74% in Lincolnshire. Through a progressive education and enforcement program by police department personnel, the usage rate, as of December 1998, increased to 89%.

For further information contact:

Sergeant Patrick D. Quillinan
Special Operations Supervisor
Lincolnshire Police Department
One Olde Half Day Road
Lincolnshire, Illinois 60069-3035
(847) 883-9900

On average, inpatient hospital care costs for an unbelted crash victim are 50% higher than those for a belted crash victim. Society bears 85% of those costs, not the individuals involved. Every American pays about \$580 a year toward the cost of crashes. If everyone buckled up, this figure would drop significantly.

"As an emergency physician, I know that safety belts and child safety seats work. Every time someone who is in a motor vehicle crash is properly belted, I know another life has been saved, a debilitating injury has been avoided, another family spared." Nancy Auer, M.D., President, American College of Emergency Physicians.

"Let's put the issue of saving lives and preventing injury in perspective. In 1995 nearly 32,000 occupants of passenger vehicles died in motor vehicle crashes. That's almost 100 people killed every day. Three out of five unbelted motorists who died would have survived for their friends, family and loved ones if they had properly buckled up." Henry B. Betts, M.D., President and CEO, Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago.

If 90% of Americans buckle up, we will prevent more than 5,500 deaths and 132,000 injuries annually.

We all have a stake in this problem and we are all part of the solution. We must all buckle ourselves, buckle our children and call upon others to do the same.

85% of all crashes occur within 25 miles of home.



Four occupants...three died, one survived.
The lone survivor was the only one wearing a safety belt...
...the click heard around the world!

Illinois' safety belt usage rate is currently at approximately 64%.

Primary enforcement will send a message to motorists that Illinois considers safety belt use mandatory for the safe operation of a motor vehicle.

By a margin of 61% to 35%, Americans support standard safety belt laws.

Research shows that high visibility enforcement works because, with many part-time and non-belt users, the fear of a citation and significant fine outweighs their fear of being injured or killed in a crash.

Currently 14 states and the District of Columbia have standard safety belt enforcement laws.

If safety belt use increased from the current 68% to 100%, the nation would save \$13.2 billion annually.

Safety belt use in many industrialized countries exceeds 85%. In Australia, Germany, and Canada, safety belt use exceeds 90%.

The U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago threw out a \$12.6 million verdict against General Motors Corp. after a man charged that he was left a quadriplegic after a crash in which his head struck the sun visor on his 1984 GM car. GM argued that the man's head hit the visor because he wasn't wearing his safety belt. (National Safety Council *Traffic Safety* September/October 1998)

MAKING SAVING LIVES A PRIORITY IN ILLINOIS

Please copy this page and return to: Judi Keippel, ITSL Newsletter Editor (address below) or fax to: 312-786-2168



I pledge to:

- *always wear my safety belt*
- *always have my passengers (adults and children) buckle up*
- *whenever in any vehicle to always buckle up*
- *to consistently advocate for safety belt use with my family, friends, and community*
- *publicly support standard safety belt enforcement*

- I would like to help get the word out about safety belt usage. What can I do?
- I have a story that I am enclosing about a safety belt survivor.
- I have a story that I am enclosing about an unbelted victim.
- Let me tell you about what my community/organization is doing regarding safety belt use.

Name

Organization

Street/city/state/zip

phone/fax

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